



Supplements

Although vitamin and mineral supplements are popular, most dietitians agree that they are not necessary for the average person to meet their nutritional needs.

The facts:

- Eating whole foods is more beneficial than taking supplements.
- Following a well-balanced diet with a wide variety of foods is the best way to get all the vitamins and minerals your body needs.
- Choosing colorful fruits and vegetables will increase your intake of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals. Aim for at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day.
- Few deliver what they claim.

Supplements for consideration:

Daily Multivitamin

Consider this an insurance policy for deficiency but know that a daily multivitamin can't replace a nutritious diet or promote health. In some instances, supplementation has been shown to cause more harm than help. Maintaining healthy eating habits with a variety of foods and using moderate portions is the most effective way to get the vitamins and minerals your body needs, even if you take a multivitamin. The latest research on the efficacy of taking multivitamins is inconclusive.

Calcium

Calcium is naturally found in dairy products and in lower quantities in green leafy vegetables. It is also fortified in some foods and drinks (calcium fortified orange juice, plant milks, and soy products). Calcium supplementation is recommended for all vegans and vegetarians that do not consume enough dietary calcium. Those with lactose intolerance or a family history of poor bone health may also choose to take a daily calcium supplement. Keep in mind that adequate vitamin D is needed to absorb calcium. Vitamin D can be found in dairy products, salmon, tuna, egg, fortified cereals, and fortified juices. The body can also make vitamin D with exposure to sunlight so go play outside!

Folate

Women of child-bearing age need folate to prevent spinal tube defects in the event pregnancy occurs. Folate is a B vitamin and naturally found in some foods such as dark green leafy vegetables, fruits and juices, nuts, beans, dairy products, meats, eggs, seafood, and grains. Fun Fact: Folic acid is the only synthetic nutrient that appears to perform better in the body than the natural form. You can find folate fortified in foods containing flour such as breads, cereals, tortillas, and pasta.

Protein Powder

On average, the typical American diet provides about two times the protein needed by the body. Therefore, protein powders and supplements are not needed for most individuals, including those who want to gain muscle. For the recreational athlete, consuming extra protein will not make you "grow muscle," however body builders may need extra protein to support advanced muscle growth. Excessive protein intake may lead to dehydration, fatigue, and/or constipation. If you are interested in increasing muscle mass, only increasing protein is like bringing bricks to the construction site but not hiring the workers. Instead, mentally divide your plate into equal thirds with a share for protein, carbohydrates, and fruits/vegetables.

Vitamin B-12, Iron, and Zinc

Following a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle can limit the intake of some essential nutrients that are commonly found in animal products. Vitamin B-12 is primarily found in animal products such as poultry, fish, dairy, and egg whites. Iron and zinc are abundant in red meats and more easily absorbed from these foods. B-12 fortified foods such as nutritional yeast, rice, soy drinks, cereals, and meat substitutes are recommended for vegans. In addition, iron and zinc supplements may be necessary for vegans and vegetarians with inadequate intake. Consult your physician before taking an iron supplement.